War, Diplomacy, and the New Global Balance of Power

James Gelvin, Part 1; Chapter 4
notes by Denis Bašic
In the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648)

- The emergence of European modern states affected the Middle East in several ways

- Competitions of Britain, France, Russia, and Germany over the eastern Mediterranean became known as "Eastern question"

- Britain and Russia also competed over northern frontier of Persia - "Great Game"
From its founding in the 13th century on, the Ottoman Empire always played an important role in the European balance of power.

In 1533 (4 years after the 1st siege of Vienna), the Ottomans sent 10,000 gold pieces to Francis I of France to join Britain and German states in an alliance against the Habsburgs. Francis did so, and supported the Ottomans in their struggle against his Catholic coreligionists. As conservatives say, there is no love in politics (and economy).

(Siege of Vienna 1529)
Ottomans viewed the Protestant movement and Protestant states as a natural allies in their common struggle against the pretensions of the Catholic Habsburgs.

Habsburg empire in 1547
When in the 1530s Henry VIII of England broke with the catholic Church and established the Church of England, he confiscated church property. Brass church bells were melted down and the tin they contained found its way to the Ottomans.

Tin was an essential ingredient in manufacturing artillery. It was scarce in the Ottoman Empire, but not in the place the ancient Romans had once called the “Tin Islands” - Great Britain.

Henry VIII of England (1491-1547)
CAPITULATIONS

- CAPITULATION
  1: a set of terms or articles constituting an agreement between governments
  2 a: the act of surrendering or yielding b: the terms of surrender

- = right to establish commercial enclaves in the Ottoman Empire, to construct a church for their exclusive use, to have the resources to the courts of their own nations, or to be exempt from taxes.

- In 1569 the Ottomans granted the first effective capitulations to the French

- After the French, the Ottomans granted the Dutch, the British, and the Russians the same privileges

- The capitulatory privileges were not abolished in most Ottoman domains until 1914

- The end of capitulations in Egypt had to wait until 1937
During the 17th century the Ottoman Empire started weakening in a military sense.

- The Ottomans were not anymore the unbeatable foe they had once been.
- In 1656, the Venetians destroyed the Ottoman fleet not far off the coast of Istanbul.
- In 1699, the Ottomans were forced out of the territories of contemporary Hungary, Croatia, and parts of Rumania by the Habsburgs.
Eastern Question

• If the Ottoman Empire collapsed, what would become of the territory under its control, particularly the Turkish straits (the narrow channel connecting the Black sea with the Mediterranean)?

• If the Ottomans were pushed out of Europe, what would be the fate of its possessions in the Balkans?

• What would be the role of Russia in the European balance of power and since Russia was the strongest Orthodox Christian state, what would be Russia’s relationship with Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans and in the Middle East?
During the 18th century Russia became the major antagonist of the Ottoman Empire. There are two reasons for this:

- After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, the tsarists Russia saw itself as the “third Rome” and protector of Orthodox population outside of its borders.

- Since its northern ports were frozen for much of the year, Russia coveted the warm-water ports of the Black sea and Bosporus and Dardanelles straits as a commercial and naval outlet to the Mediterranean.
The first major Russo-Ottoman War, that of 1768-74, was an indirect result of Russian interference in Poland. Sultan Mustafa III, alarmed by Russia's action and encouraged by France, declared war on Catherine II of Russia. The Russians conquered (1771) the Crimea, where a pro-Russian khan was installed, and overran Moldavia and Walachia. The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji (1774) declared the Crimean khanate independent of the sultan, gave Russia considerable territorial gains, conceded to Russia the role of protector of the sultan's Greek Orthodox subjects, and allowed Russian shipping to navigate the Black Sea and pass through the Straits.

Watch the Documentary: Getting to know the Real Catherine the Great